

Trails

Introduction

An overwhelmingly high percentage of people surveyed in the 1998 Statewide Participation Survey indicated that walking, hiking, jogging, bicycling, and horseback riding are activities that they would like to participate in more if adequate facilities were available. These linear recreation activities translate into trail use.

Trails are a controversial topic across the country, and Indiana is a reflection of these issues. The level of acceptance of trails has improved in recent years, but some trail development continues to be an issue. Federal, state, and local government agencies and private groups across the state seek to improve public trail opportunities. At the state level, the IDNR's Division of Outdoor Recreation works with Indiana's Trails Advisory Board and others to do so.

Established in 1994, the Trails Advisory Board consists of 14 citizen volunteers that represent a variety of trail interests:

- all terrain vehicle riders
- bicyclists
- environmental groups
- equestrians
- four-wheel drive vehicle drivers
- local park and recreation agencies
- off-road motorcyclists
- pedestrians (hikers, runners, walkers)
- snowmobilers
- soil and water conservation districts
- sportswomen and men
- trail support groups
- users with disabilities
- water trail users

The Trails Advisory Board serves as the Department of Natural Resources' advisor on trail related issues and is responsible for the development of *Indiana Trails 2000*, a state trails plan completed in 1996 that was developed by trail users for trail providers. *Indiana Trails 2000* was aimed at providing direction for trail development at the local, regional, and state levels. This plan served as a building block and a valuable resource for the development of this plan update and the inclusion of trails in this SCORP.

The goal of this plan is to highlight the various trail problems and concerns, inform readers about any misconceptions, provide information about trail use and issues, and offer goals and objectives that serve as trail priorities.



Trails - What are They, and Why Have Them?

Trails mean different things to different people. Images vary from a narrow path through a hardwood forest to a paved loop trail within a community park to a groomed path in the snow. For others, a trail may be a river or stream for canoes and kayaks. One thing common to each of these descriptions is that a trail is a linear corridor, on land or in water, with public access for recreation or authorized alternative modes of transportation.

Trails are made of a variety of materials and can have soft or hard surfaces. Soft surfaces include soil, woodchips, or water, while hard surface trails are constructed from materials like stone, asphalt, or concrete. Trails can be designed to accommodate a variety of uses ranging from pedestrian activities to motorized uses. Multi-use trails can present user conflict problems, but they can also provide recreation opportunities to the largest variety and number of users.

The popularity of trails and greenways has grown tremendously since the development of the previous trails plan. More and more communities are embracing trails because of the unique opportunities and benefits they provide. From ecological to economic benefits, trails can improve communities by protecting natural resources, providing outstanding recreational opportunities, promoting alternative transportation, improving the health of individuals through exercise, stimulating economic development by attracting visitors, and providing the public with access to a serene, natural environment.

Common Concerns about Trails

Trail development has increased dramatically since the beginnings of the last trails plan in 1994, and more and more people are recognizing the benefits that trails provide. However, although diminishing, concerns about trails are still prevalent. These concerns generally fall into three categories: economic, safety, and management.

Concerns about economic issues include the effect a trail may have on the local tax base. Many believe that public land acquisition for trails will take land off the tax rolls. It is true that there may be a minor loss in property tax revenue, however, related trail activity can generate substantial other revenues to more than counterbalance this loss. Additionally, trails and greenways can actually save money by keeping areas from being developed, thus offering protection from flood damage. They can also generate revenue by attracting business and families to a community.

Others are concerned about the impact trails may have on the value of adjacent properties. As the body of research and literature expands on this subject, more and more evidence shows that trails generally have either a neutral or positive impact on adjacent land value.

Concerns about trail safety includes those related to crime, vandalism, and emergency incidents. There is no question that unlawful activity can take place on a trail, just like in any other

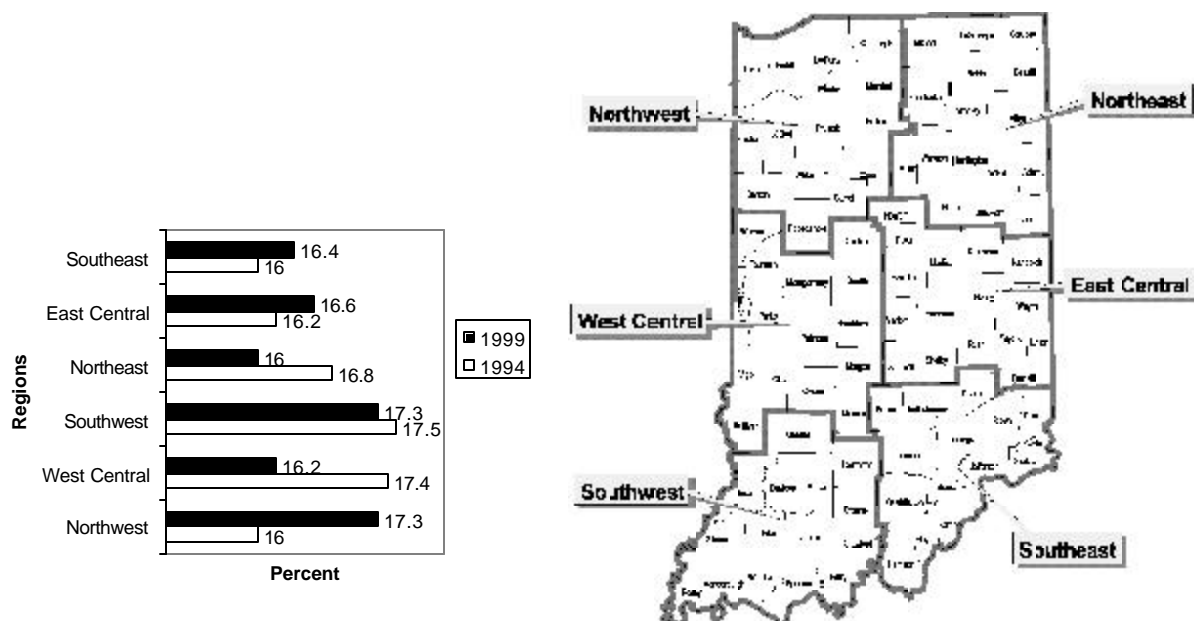
area of a community; however, many studies show that trails have had little or no effect on crime and vandalism experienced by adjacent landowners. Well defined, planned, and managed trails with appropriate access and monitoring should present little problems for emergency response.

Trail management and maintenance is another area of concern. Trail planning and design should incorporate citizen concerns and encourage open communication. If input and buy-in is sought from adjacent landowners and the community at large, then trail management and maintenance should be less of an issue. Adjacent landowners and community residents can be great allies, they make excellent volunteers and their familiarity with the surrounding environment often results in efficient and effective recommendations.

Trails Survey

A statewide trails survey was conducted in October 1994 and produced valuable information about the public's trail preferences and their feelings about various trail issues. A follow-up survey was conducted in October 1999 using the same methodology and asking the same questions (refer to the Appendix for the Trails Survey Instrument). This presented an opportunity to compare the 1994 and 1999 survey results and draw conclusions about the status of trail issues and identify any trends. The survey information that follows can be useful to recreation providers in helping them understand and assess trail needs and issues. Highlights of the survey results follow the graphics.

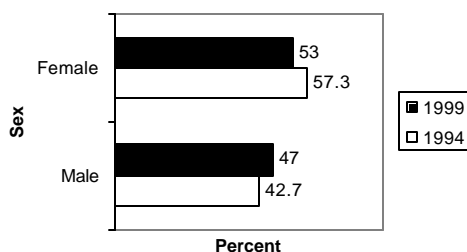
Question 1: In which area of Indiana do you live?



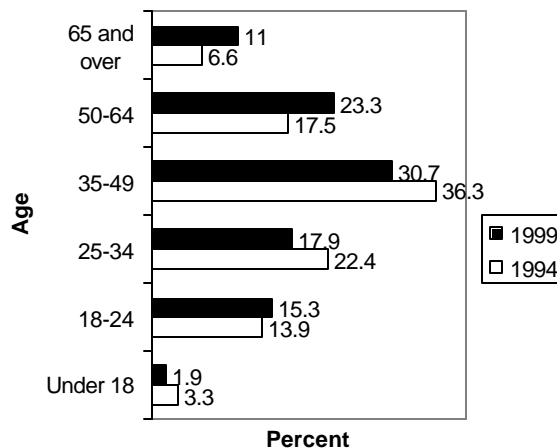


SCORP 2000

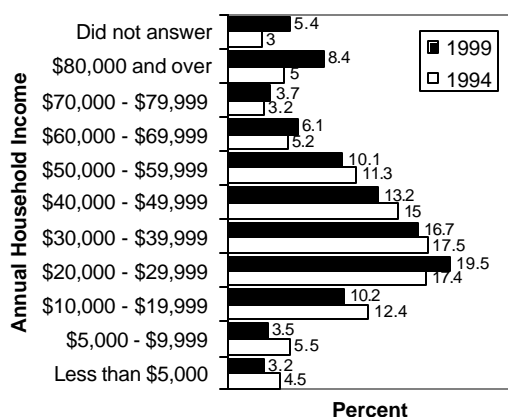
Question 2: Are you.....



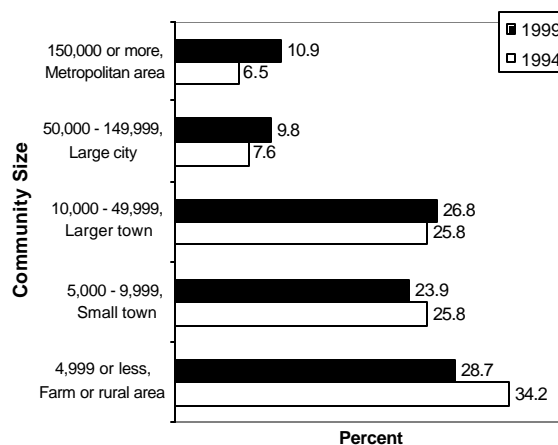
Question 3: What is your age group?



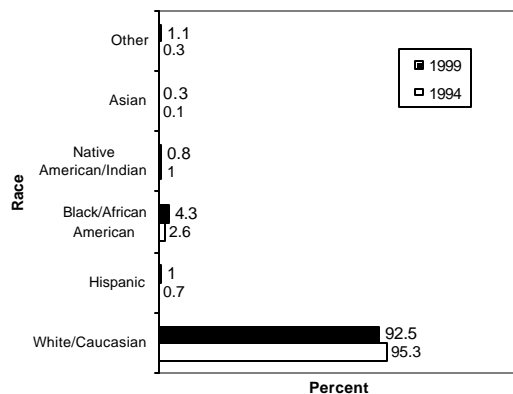
Question 4: Which best describes your total annual household income, before taxes, for 1998 (1994)?



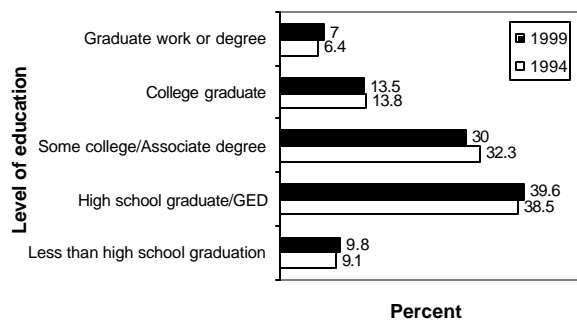
Question 5: What size community do you live in?



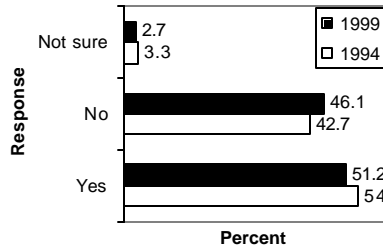
Question 6: Are you.....



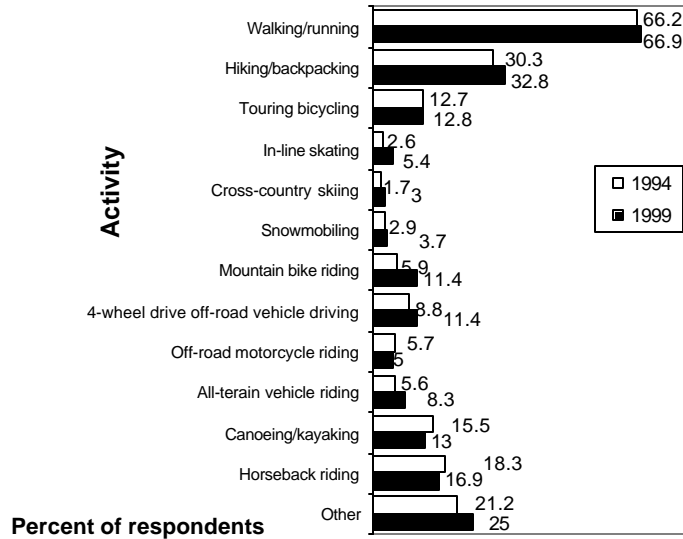
Question 7: What is the highest level of education you have completed?



Question 8 In the past twelve months have you used a designated recreational trail?

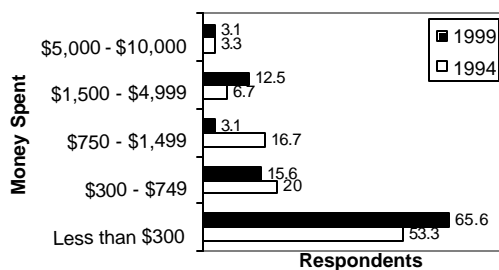


Question 9 What trail activities do you participate in the majority of the time (multiple responses allowed)?

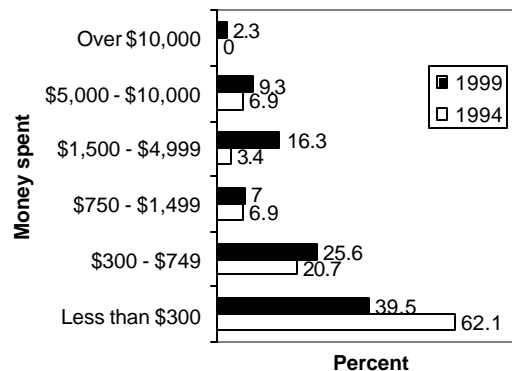


Question 10 Within the past year, approximately how much did you spend on equipment for participation in the following activities?

SNOWMOBILING



OFF-ROAD MOTORCYCLING

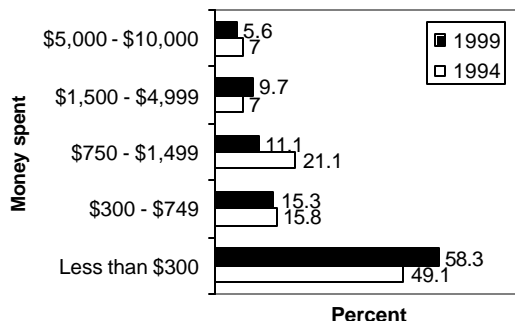




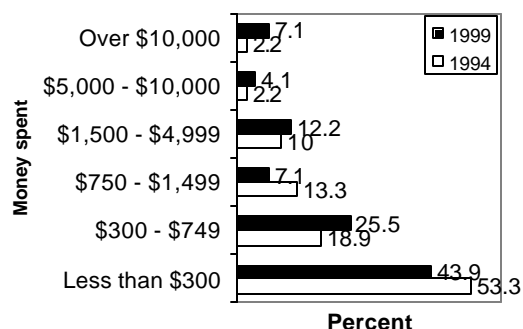
SCORP 2000

Question 10 (continued): Within the past year, approximately how much did you spend on equipment for participation in the following activities?

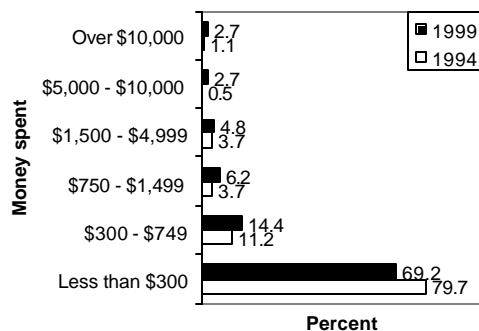
ALL TERRAIN VEHICLE RIDING



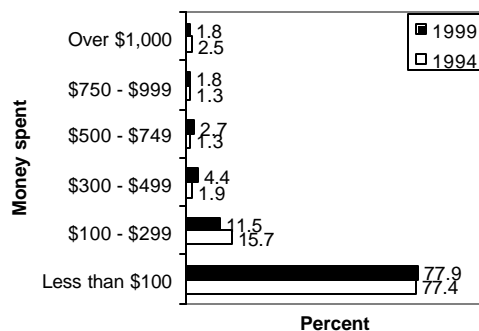
4-WHEEL DRIVE OFF-ROAD VEHICLE RIDING



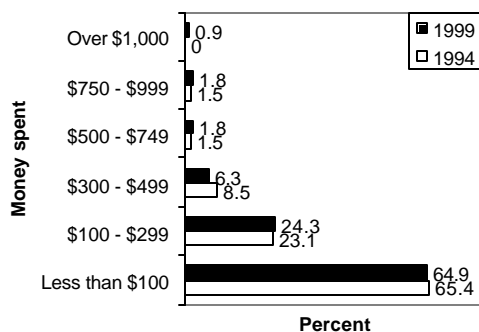
HORSEBACK RIDING



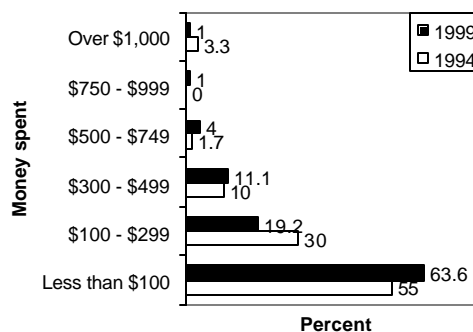
CANOEING/KAYAKING



TOURING BICYCLING

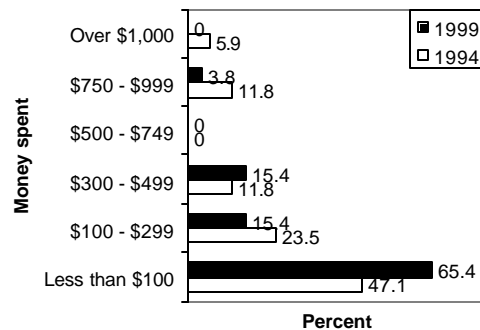


MOUNTAIN BIKE RIDING

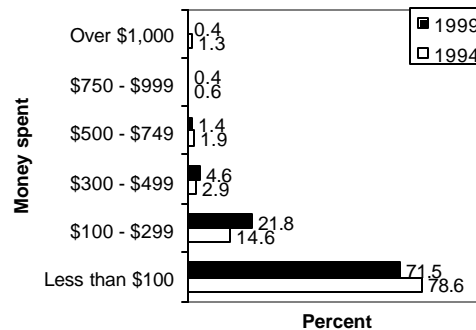


Question 10 (continued): Within the past year, approximately how much did you spend on equipment for participation in the following activities?

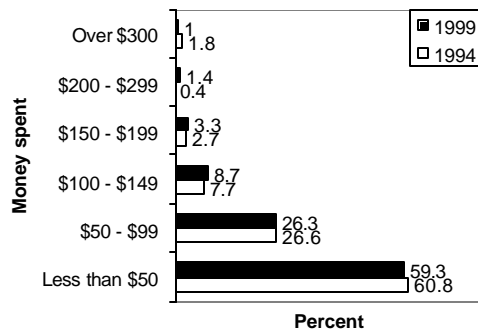
CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING



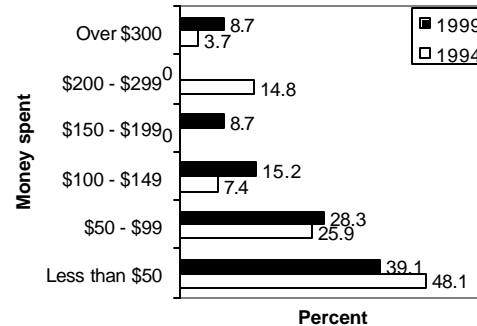
HIKING/BACKPACKING



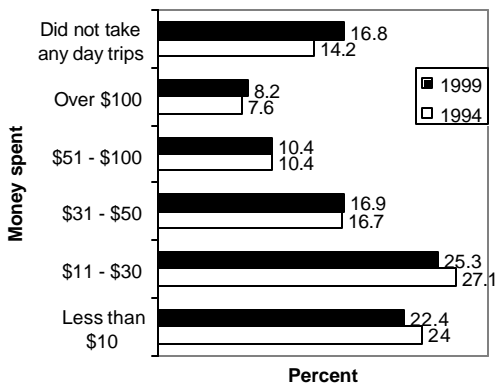
WALKING/RUNNING



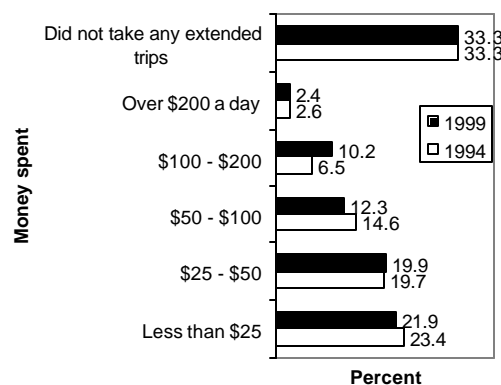
IN-LINE SKATING



Question 11: What is the best estimate of how much money you spent on your last ONE DAY recreational trip that involved the use of trails (include transportation, meals, etc.)?



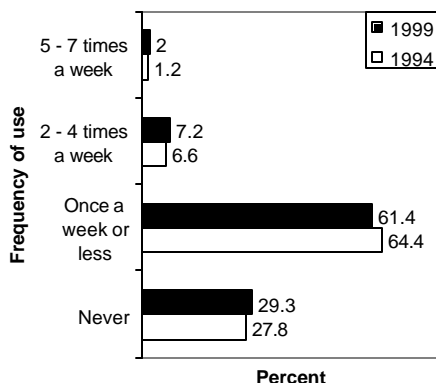
Question 12: On your last EXTENDED (2 or more days) recreational trip that involved the use of trails, approximately how much money would you say you spent PER DAY?



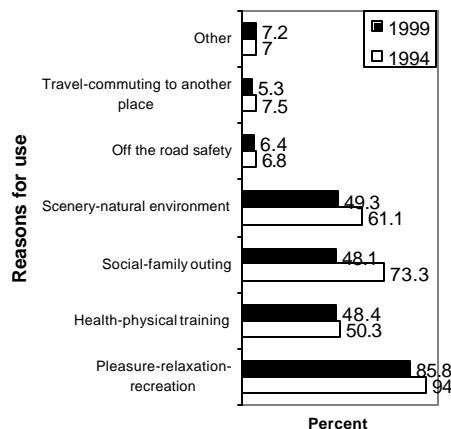


SCORP 2000

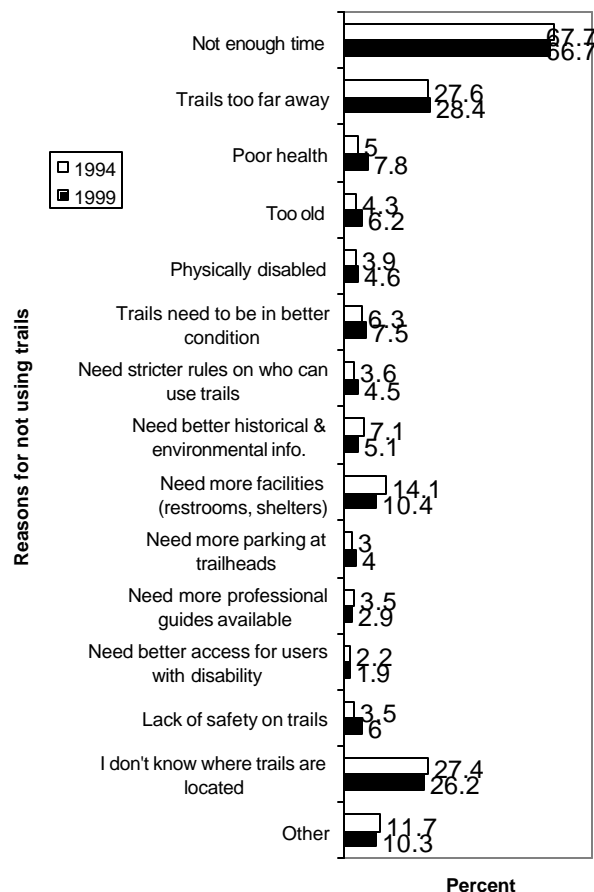
Question 13: How often do you use designated recreational trails?



Question 14: What are your reasons for using these trails? (Not asked of those who never use trails; multiple responses allowed)

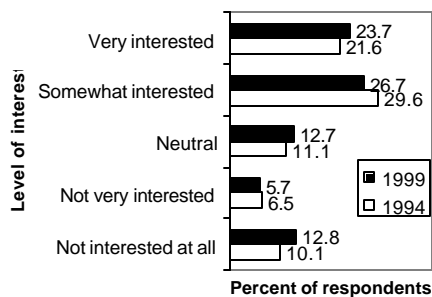


Question 15: What are the primary reasons you don't use recreational trails more often? (Only asked of those who use trails once a week or less; multiple responses allowed)

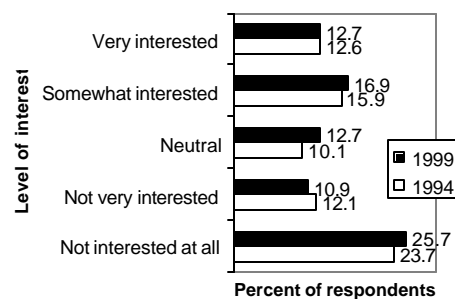


Question 16: Please select your level of interest in participating in the following activities:

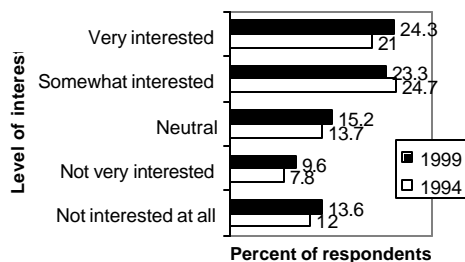
DAY HIKE IN THE WILDERNESS



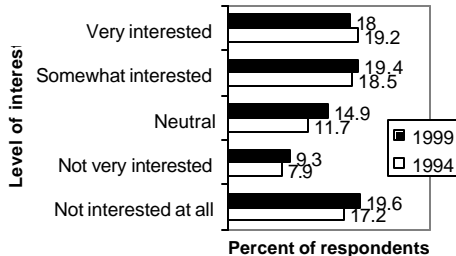
OVERNIGHT BACKPACK HIKING



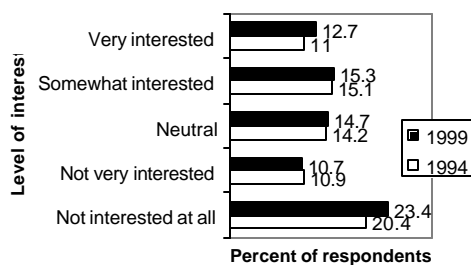
WALK ON A PUBLIC TRAIL IN YOUR CITY



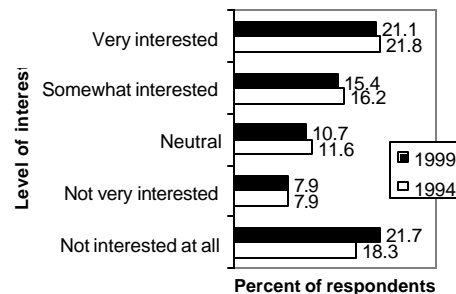
BICYCLING WITHIN YOUR CITY/TOWN



BICYCLING OUTSIDE YOUR CITY/TOWN



HORSEBACK RIDING

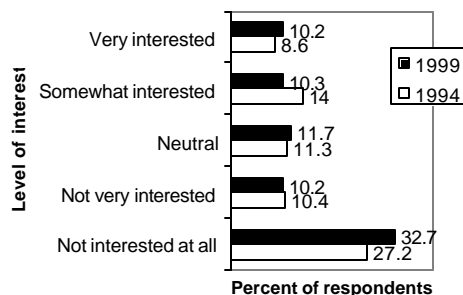




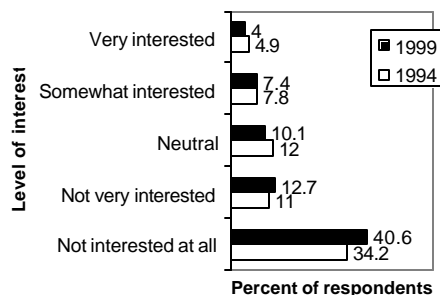
SCORP 2000

Question 16 (continued): Please select your level of interest in participating in the following activities

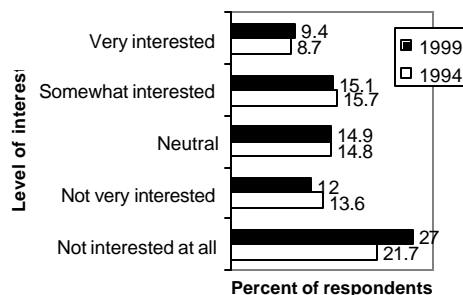
SNOWMOBILING



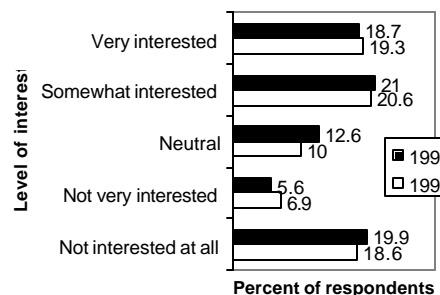
CROSS-COUNTRY SKIING



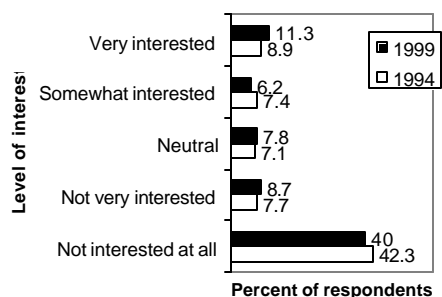
RUNNING OR JOGGING



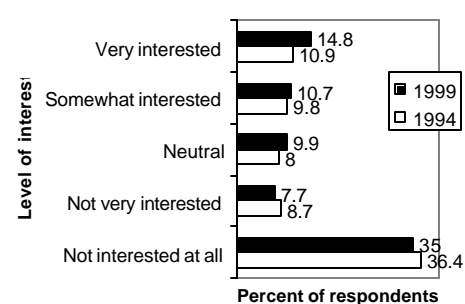
CANOEING



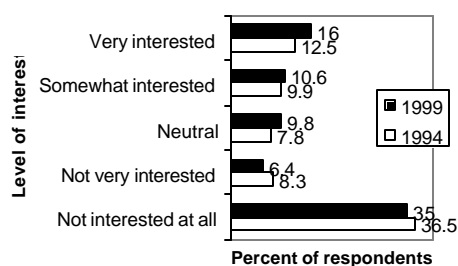
OFF-ROAD MOTORCYCLING



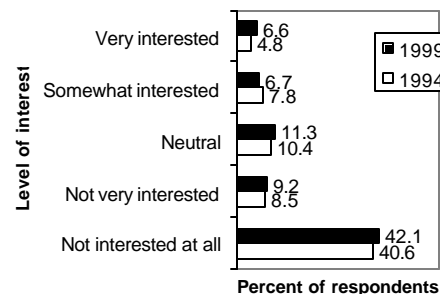
ALL TERRAIN VEHICLE RIDING



OFF ROAD 4-WHEEL DRIVE RIDING



IN-LINE SKATING

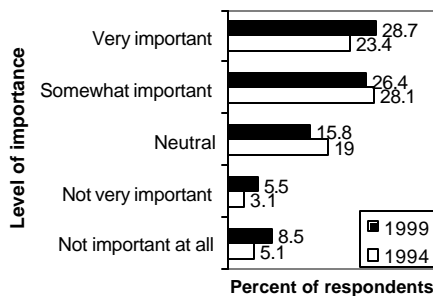


1999 Weighted Score Ranking for Participation in Trail Activities

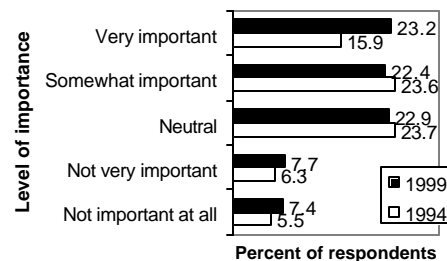
<u>Activity</u>	<u>Weighted Score</u>	<u>Rank</u>
Day hike in the wilderness	3.53	1 st
Walk on public trail in your city	3.41	2 nd
Canoeing	3.17	3 rd
Bicycling within your city/town	3.09	4 th
Horseback riding	3.08	5 th
Bicycling outside your city/town	2.78	6 th
Overnight backpack hiking	2.75	7 th
Running or jogging	2.59	8 th
Off road 4-wheel drive riding	2.56	9 th
All-terrain vehicle riding	2.52	10 th
Snowmobiling	2.40	11 th
Off-road motorcycling	2.19	12 th
In-line skating	2.03	13 th
Cross country skiing	1.95	14 th

Question 17: How important/unimportant do you feel the following trail issues are?

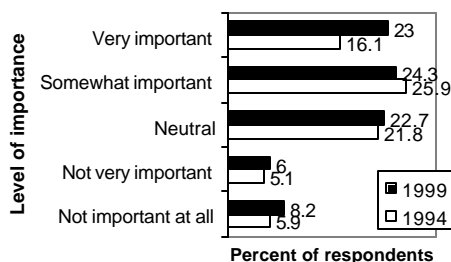
BUILDING MORE TRAILS



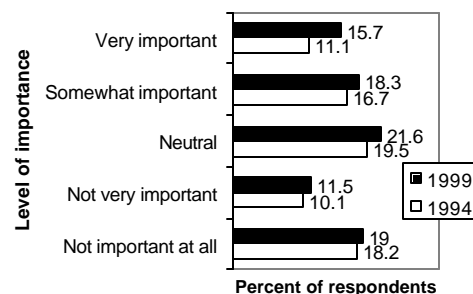
BUILDING LONG DISTANCE TRAILS



LINKING TOGETHER EXISTING TRAILS



PAVING TRAIL WITH ASPHALT

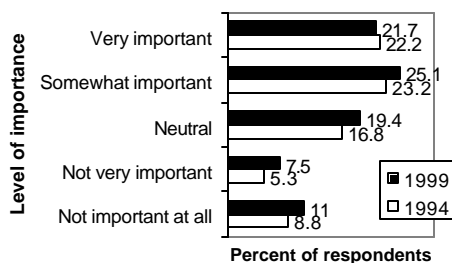




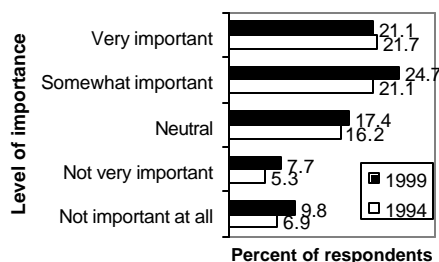
SCORP 2000

Question 17 (continued): How important/unimportant do you feel the following trail issues are?

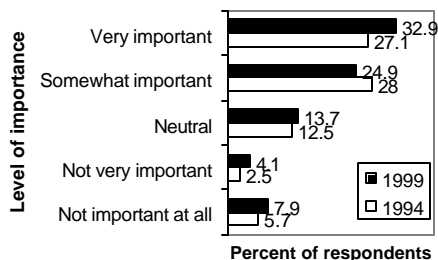
DISIGNATING ROADS AS BIKE ROUTES



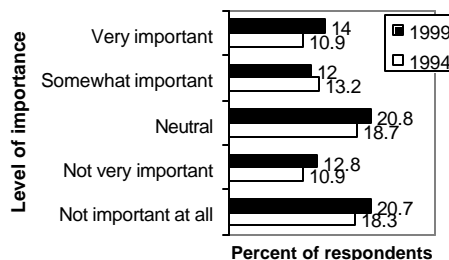
DEVELOPING BIKE COMMUTING TRAILS



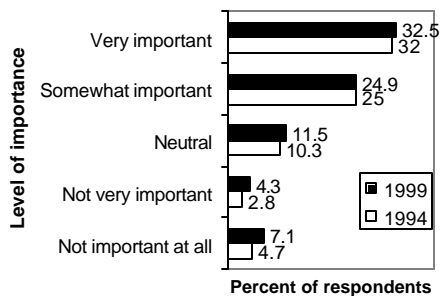
DEVELOPING TRAILS CLOSE TO HOME



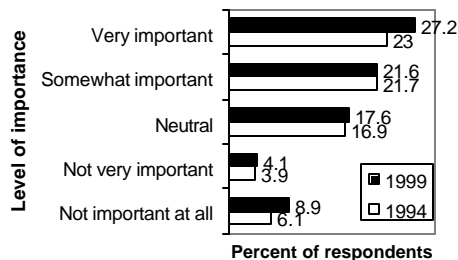
DEVELOPING TRAILS FOR MOTORIZED USE



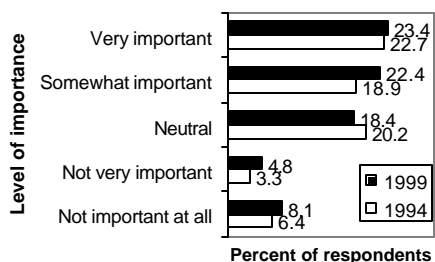
PUBLISHING TRAILS MAP GUIDES



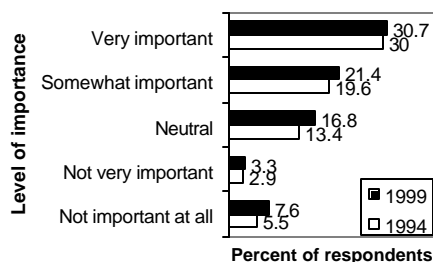
ACQUIRING MORE LAND FOR TRAILS



DESIGNATING A FUNDING SOURCE



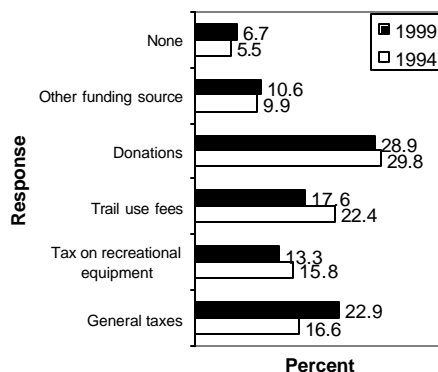
IMPROVE TRAILS FOR THE DISABLED



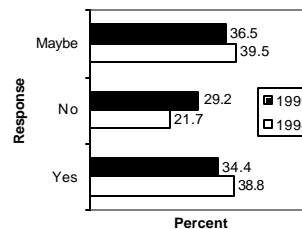
1999 Weighted Score Ranking for Issue Importance

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Weighted Score</u>	<u>Rank</u>
Publishing trail map guides	3.89	1 st
Developing trails close to home	3.85	2 nd
Improving trails for the disabled	3.81	3 rd
Building more trails	3.72	4 th
Acquiring more land for trails	3.68	5 th
Designating a funding source	3.63	6 th
Linking together existing trails	3.57	7 th
Building long distance trails	3.56	8 th
Developing bike commuting trails	3.49	9 th
Designating roads as bike routes	3.46	10 th
Paving trail with asphalt	3.00	11 th
Developing trails for motorized use	2.82	12 th

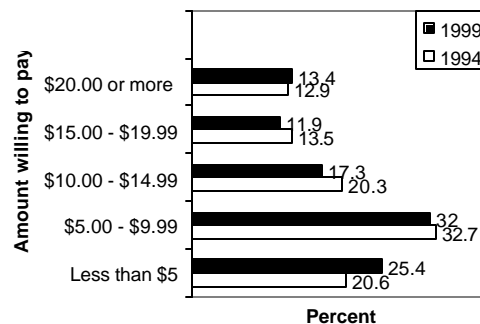
Question 18 Of the following which do you feel should be the primary source of funding for the development of recreational trails?



Question 19 If the money was spent in your local area for trail upkeep and new trail development, would you be willing to pay an annual fee to use designated recreational trails?



Question 20 How much would be be willing to pay for this annual trail fee? (Only asked of those willing to pay an annual fee)





Analysis

Surveys provide researchers with data to analyze and serve as the basis for identifying trends and making predictions. The data obtained “from those polled” in the trails survey provides us with insight into the trail preferences of Indiana citizens, and allows us to make generalizations about trails and outdoor recreation that are supported by evidence. The following observations were derived from the survey data and can be useful to trail enthusiasts in understanding trail dynamics and for trail planning. Readers are encouraged to view the survey results in more detail to find additional, specific information that is relevant to community issues or needs.

Highlights

- Indiana’s population is aging
- Indiana’s population is becoming more racially diverse
- Indiana is becoming more urban in nature as community sizes are increasing
- More than ½ of the respondents used trails in the last year
- Of those who indicated that they used trails, more than 60% said they used trails at least once a week
- Lack of time, distance to trails, and lack of familiarity with trail locations are the primary reasons why people continue to say that they do not use trails more often
- Publishing trail map guides and developing trails close to home were the most important issues
- Walking/running is still the most popular trail activity
- People were most interested in these two trail activities: a day hike in the wilderness and a walk on a public trail in their city
- Pleasure-relaxation-recreation continues to be the most popular reason people use trails
- Although the top five trail activities remained the same, participation in mountain biking, in-line skating, and motorized uses increased the most
- Spending on equipment for participation increased the most for in-line skating, horseback riding, and motorized uses; spending on cross-country skiing equipment declined the most
- Fewer people favor trail use fees and taxes on recreational equipment to support funding for trail development, while more support the use of general taxes as the primary source of funding

Trail Issues

The Trails Advisory Board, with help and input from the general public, identified five main issues for trails in Indiana.

Issue #1: There is not enough public land available for trail use.

In Indiana, less than four percent of the entire state is in public ownership. This severely limits the ability to expand public trail opportunities. Acquisition of more land and waterways must be actively pursued to meet the growing demand for trail based recreation, including sufficient buffer zones and development of support facilities. Acquisition of land for linking greenway corridors to create a larger system should be pursued. Acquisition of land for opportunities of trail activities not currently available should also be pursued.

Acquisition opportunities for public lands may include, but are not limited to, the following types: river corridors, abandoned railroads, active railroads, highway rights-of-way, existing trails, developed land, reclaimed mining sites, and military lands. Where acquisition is not possible, other options for establishing trail opportunities include lease agreements, easements, and joint agreements with utility companies.

Issue #2: There is a need for trail design, construction, and maintenance standards.

Trail design, construction, and maintenance standards should be created cooperatively between the lead planning agency and the community. Public needs and concerns and environmental constraints must be addressed in developing these standards.

Standards should provide for the protection and enhancement of natural and cultural resources. Existing state, local, and federal regulations must be included in standards for trail development. Trail standards should address preservation of sensitive natural areas, carrying capacity and trail use, facility design, accessibility, and risk management. Regular monitoring after trail development assures that trails continue to meet use demands, safety standards, and environmental standards.

Issue #3: More information is needed on trail systems.

Education is the key to self-regulated trail use. Information should be made available to all trail users and potential users on the importance of responsible use. Information on the causes of user group conflicts, trails serving as alternative modes of transportation, trail safety, and trail benefits should be included in trail public education programs.

Comprehensive and easily obtainable trail information is an important part of any trail system. Information can be presented through brochures, videos, posters, outdoor signs, and live programs. Minimum information should include trail regulations, trail uses, safety precautions,



maps of local area trails and access points, and trail layout maps. Additional information may include references to outdoor ethics, accessibility, natural resources, and local history and culture. Information must conform to American Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.

Issue #4: Trail networks are needed for multiple uses and to promote alternative transportation.

Trails need to be provided for a variety of uses, both motorized and nonmotorized, and on both land and water. More opportunities are needed for bicycling (road and mountain), hiking and walking, horseback riding, in-line skating, and snowmobiling. Public trail opportunities are needed for all-terrain vehicles, off-road motorcycling, off-highway vehicles, and new uses which may arise in the future.

Multiple-use trails can be designed to accommodate many different user groups on the same trail. They can be developed in a variety of ways such as designing for different uses on the same treadway, establishing separate-use treadways within a trail corridor, or instituting time zones allowing for specific uses during certain times of the day.

In addition to recreation, trails need to be established as alternative transportation routes: trails that connect housing, schools, businesses, retail centers, recreation areas, and other popular areas. Benefits of using these trails instead of driving automobiles include lower air pollution levels, reduced gasoline costs, and improved fitness.

Issue #5: Long-term trail management planning is needed.

Trail planning does not end after the trail has been created. Trail management and monitoring is an ongoing process and requires planning. Long term management plans can be used to: address liability concerns; suggest actions when trail conditions and/or usage does not meet predetermined standards; ensure that proper maintenance will be conducted throughout the life of the trail; and define the roles of volunteers utilized in trail management.

Trail Goals and Objectives Developed by the Indiana Trails Advisory Board

The foundation for the trail priorities came from the *Indiana Trails 2000* plan. Building on the information gathered from the planning process that went into the development of *Indiana Trails 2000*, the Trails Advisory Board revisited the issues and updated the goals and objectives to reflect changes that have occurred in the status of trail recreation over time. Public comment generated by an open-house presentation of the goals and objectives was also received and incorporated into the document. These goals and objectives are aimed at addressing trail issues and needs across Indiana in order to improve trail opportunities. Responsibility for implementation of the goals and objectives rests on the shoulders of all trail providers. The trail related goals are presented in terms of the issues they attempt to satisfy.

ISSUE #1: There is not enough public land available for trail use.

GOAL # 1: Acquire more land and waterways for trail use.

- Objective 1: Identify potential areas suitable for multi-purpose trail use in each region of the state.
- Objective 2: Identify at least one trail opportunity in each region and acquire the land necessary to develop it.
- Objective 3: Identify opportunities for intra- and inter-state trail connections and acquire the land necessary to develop it.
- Objective 4: Encourage legislation that would provide tax incentives to landowners and public utilities to participate in trail network programs.
- Objective 5: Encourage legislation supporting rail-trails.
- Objective 6: Provide public areas for the legal operation of ATVs, motorcycles, and off-highway vehicles.
- Objective 7: Provide public areas for the legal operation of off-road bicycles.



ISSUE #2: Trail networks are needed for multiple uses and to promote alternative transportation.

GOAL # 2: Develop trail networks that allow for multiple uses and promote alternative transportation.

- Objective 1:** Advocate and support legislation that furthers the development of multi-use trail networks.
- Objective 2:** Identify potential and update existing trail connection opportunities.
- Objective 3:** Complete at least one ADA accessible multi-use trail each year.
- Objective 4:** Develop a network of existing roads (including those unimproved but legally open) for recreational use and alternative transportation that is compatible with area priorities.
- Objective 5:** Ensure that proposed uses of trails are consistent with their natural and cultural environment.

ISSUE #3: There is a need for trail design, construction, and maintenance standards.

GOAL # 3: Set and adhere to design, construction, and maintenance standards that are safe and environmentally sound.

- Objective 1:** Develop a maintenance strategy plan and guidelines.
- Objective 2:** Establish a program for users to participate in construction and/or marking of specific trails.
- Objective 3:** Identify uniform symbols for trail activities and promote uniform signage.
- Objective 4:** Continue to design trails for single and multiple uses.
- Objective 5:** Design multi-use trails that include off-road motorized uses.

ISSUE #4: More information is needed on trail systems

GOAL # 4: Provide information on trail systems.

- Objective 1: Create trail guides, identifying trails by region and trail type.
- Objective 2: Promote responsible trail use to foster positive public opinion.
- Objective 3: Develop a trail rating system to inform users of trail difficulty.
- Objective 4: Promote trail systems through the media.
- Objective 5: Promote adjoining landowners relations programs to facilitate information exchange.
- Objective 6: Use current technology to its fullest extent to provide information on trails.

ISSUE #5: Long-term trail management planning is needed.

GOAL # 5: Ensure long-term trail management planning.

- Objective 1: Establish an “adopt-a-trail” program for user groups and other volunteer organizations to assist in or be responsible for maintaining designated trails.
- Objective 2: Identify and involve volunteer groups in trail maintenance, construction, user safety, security, and responsible use.
- Objective 3: Include the use of dedicated state funds from ORV and snowmobile registrations for motorized trail design, construction, and maintenance.
- Objective 4: Develop funding strategies for trail management.